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**1. FRENCH MAY HALT AIR SUPPLY OF LAOTIAN FORCES AT MUONG PEUN**

General Archimrault, chief of the French air force in the Far East, is reliably reported to have stated on 22 August that in the event of a "major development" in the royal government's conflict with the Pathet Lao, it would remain French policy to withdraw its air support of the Laotian army.

The American army attaché in Vientiane points out there is immediate danger that government forces of about eight battalions in the Muong Peun area may be cut off from the logistic support now being provided by French C-47's if these aircraft should become a target of Communist antiaircraft fire.

**Comment**

The government's overland line of communications to the Muong Peun area presents serious physical obstacles to adequate logistic support, and is constantly subject to Pathet Lao harassment.

During the Pathet Lao attack on Muong Peun in early July, the French refused to fly in Laotian reinforcements and the royal government was forced to charter civil aircraft at heavy expense. In addition to the problem of its cost, the local commercial transport capability is believed insufficient for full-scale logistic support.

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### **3. POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SOVIET AND AFGHAN CONSULATES**

Afghanistan is considering opening consulates in Bokhara, Merv, and Tashkent in the USSR, according to a low-ranking official of the Afghan

Foreign Ministry. The statement was made to the first secretary of the Iraqi embassy in Kabul.

The American embassy comments that this may be an outgrowth of the Soviet-Afghan transit agreement and that, if true, it could presage opening of Soviet consulates in Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, and possibly Kandahar.

#### **Comment**

This report of Afghan intentions may be another effort to alarm Pakistan and Western nations and to force the lifting of Karachi's undeclared economic blockade.

Even if Afghanistan were to allow opening of Soviet consulates at Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat, however, agreement would be unlikely to Soviet representation at Kandahar in the south, where Russian influence has never been permitted and where there is no commercial justification for a consulate.

Bokhara, Merv, and Tashkent are all on Soviet railroads leading to the Afghan border. Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat are on the main roads from the Soviet border to other parts of Afghanistan.

#### **4. COMMENT ON ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN BORDER INCIDENTS**

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The incidents along the Gaza border on 25 and 26 August reported by Israel as having been at Egyptian initiative do not appear to be more serious than other border raids which have occurred during the past year. The actions probably were taken in retaliation for earlier incidents on 22 August, which each side

accuses the other of starting. They may also have been intended by Cairo to add force to its announcement that Egypt will not continue border talks with Israel so long as it feels Tel Aviv seeks primarily 'political gains' rather than an easing of tensions.

The Israeli reaction so far indicates that Tel Aviv will not use these incidents as an excuse to make a full-fledged attack on Egypt. However, some kind of new Israeli retaliation probably can be expected.

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